

Conversation with 15 year old male, Virginia (Transcription)

START M32 A(4)

How old were you when you left Vietnam?

S: I was about eight.

F: Eight years old. Do you remember much about what your life was like there or...?

S: Yes...it was pretty nice. Had a lot of friends. <gap> the same like the Americans from Vietnam (?)

F: WEre you...did you live in a city or town....?

S: Yeah, city....Saigon.

F: Oh you lived in Saigon. Do you remember much about what Saigon was like? Can you tell me something about it?

S: Well, was crowd like crowded..was pretty nice. We lived near the Capitol and around there downtown.

Library of Congress

Subject #29, page 2

F: Did you have a house or....

S: Yes.

F: How big was it or what was it like?

S: It was ok. It was, like, you know like in Vietnam like when my mom gets married, she goes and live near my grandma's house so we have pretty big and everybody we in same house.

F: How many people were living all together? ER, were your grandparents living there?

S: Yes my grandparents were and then we had like relatives uncles and aunts.

F: Ok, what kind of school were you going to?

S: I went to elementary school. Well...it's uh, yeah elementary....but it was crowded...bout forty students in one classroom. And we went to school from seven to twelve.

F: 7 in the morning?

S: Uh huh seven in the morning until twelve o'clock.

Library of Congress

F: How was it different from the schools here? Do you remember?

S: Uh huh. We went on Saturdays and we didn't eat lunch in school. Sometimes we have half day so some adults can come and take classes. It was more strict and it was <gap> and the classroom is not....

Subject #29, page 3

S: it's.....the ground is like dirt. It's not like uh tiles or anything like that. And it was open doors, not two stories or anything like that. Lot of trees around. It's pretty ok, I guess.

F: What different things did people study there than they study here? Do you remember?

S: I think so. We study a lot of history there and we had a lot of emphasize on math and uh, it's basically the same except it....

F: Uh huh. You said there were some classes for adults? What kind of classes would they have?

S: Uh, I don't really know. Because we take classes till nine thirty something like that, then we leave, then some adults come there and they take classes. It's maybe like night school <gap> here take a class.

F: What were your teachers like? Do you remember?

Library of Congress

S: I don't think so. I don't think we had that much male teachers back there. Teachers were, like I said, strict. Didn't allow <no like?> games and all that in the class.

F: What kind of games....do schools here allow games and...

S: Well, I think it isn't that about strict like you know, third grade and all that, you get to play around like that and in the first grade you sleep, we don't play much.

F: Did you have to study a lot at home? Do a lot of homework?

Subject #29, page 4

S: Well, cause we only stay for five hours a day we didn't have that much homework. But the homework's were harder.

F: Did your mom make you study certain hours or...I know people have talked about how to go home and have a schedule of how long they had to study.

S: Well, I don't think, like the end of....like now she has to but not then.

F: Did you have to wear a uniform or....?

S: Yes we have uniforms.

F: What kind?

Library of Congress

S: It was blue shorts and a white t-shirt with out (?) name of the school this on it <gap> (?)

F: How about the girls?

S: I don't know about the girls cause boys and girls, you have separate schools. (inaudible)

F: Uh, what kind of work did your parents or your family do?

S: Well my dad was a teacher...for I think it was a high school. and my mom....my mom didn't work and then my uncles, they were in college <gap>.

F: Do you ever remember getting lost when you were a child?

S: Yes, I was lost once.

F: What happened.

S: Uh, we went to downtown to buy some fish. And then, it was like a open pet shop. It had....and I looked at some snakes and then my mom...she...I think she went in (?) and I got lost.

Subject #29, page 5

F: What happened when she....?

Library of Congress

S: Uh, she...uh there was these guys, they were selling like coke and then they found me and then I sat in the car and then my mom saw me.

F: How about since you've been here? Have you gotten lost here?

S: No. I was lost in one of the camps...I didn't get lost but my cousin got lost and then...

F: What happened?

S: Well, we went to take a shower and then we went out... but he left before we did and then he walk, he couldn't find his way back to the camp. And then he went around. He found then.

F: What kind of camp?

S: It was in Guam (?).

F: Oh, I see. Um, do you know any good Vietnamese stories or folk tales that you could tell me?

S: Well, I use to but I don't know it...I don't know how to read any...not any more. I love like tales you know like about Chinese and <gap>.

F: What kind of things would they say about them?

Library of Congress

S: They won't say anything bad, but, I mean, like we had tales, really wild and....

F: What would they do wild?

Subject #29, page 6

S: It would be in like the old times when we fought with swords and ar...pointed arrows. And they would have like a turtle, big turtle that gave a sword to the king and then he would beat up the enemies of China...

F: Does your mom tell you those kind of stories now or....?

S: No. She....my brother...she still reads the books that we have.

F: The uh....boooks about..from Vietnam?

S: Um hm.

F: Ok, uh, can you tell me about when you left Vietnam? How you left?

S: Yes, uh, see, my uncle was in the Navy. And he knew a lot of generals and all, and so we went out and waited. We were supposed to go by ship early before everybody else did and then we left the paper <gap> and then we went down to the gates. But we couldn't get them because the general he already left and we had to wait like everybody else. And then

Library of Congress

it was really crowded. Everybody pushing and shoving. And then they open up the gates and we got into one of them Navy ships...that my uncle knew.

F: Was this right at the end when Saigon fell...right at the end of the war?

Subject #29, page 7

S: Yes, we left and I think it was the next day that Saigon fell.

F: Do you remember much about the war or what you thought about it at the time?

S: Well I was small. I just remember that it was the twenty ninth or twenty eight, just a couple days before we left....that there was lot of bombings and that we went shopping, then we had to go home real fast. And that night it was bombing and the house movement.

F: Do you remember much about other things that were going on in the country or...?

S: Yeah, we had curfews at twelve midnight and a couple days before Saigon fell they didn't let us go to the street. We heard a lot bout....on the news we heard a lot about their truck moving in.

F: When you left on the ship did you come back here to the United States or did you go somewhere else first?

Library of Congress

S: Well, we left on the first ship and then we switch ships a lot. We went to Phillippines. We made that one stop and then we went to Guam and then we wait there until the plane took us into Pennsylvania.

F: And how long did you stay in Guam?

S: I think we stays for over <unintelligible text> My uncle, he want to go to California. But, you know, it was really crowded. But <unintelligible text> didn't let us go that's why we had to wait. And then we went to Pennsylvania.

Subject #29, page 8

F: What was the camp like at Guam?

S: Well, they have tent that we live in every evening. And it wasn't that crowded. They had bus that took us to the beach. And my brother, he got the chicken pox and we got to go to the hospital. And we saw movies. They had movies for the....they have like...place that we went then to get food three times a day and at night they show movies.

F: What kind of movies did they show?

S: They show uh Dracula movies and horror and they show science fiction movies.

F: And when you went to Pennsylvania, in <gap>

S: Yes.

Library of Congress

F: How long were you there? What was that like?

S: It was about six months, I don't remember. They have...it was pretty nice. Here we have better food and we also got to go to town and all that, we see all these things. And they had like contests for the kids..to play..games.

F: What kind of games? Did you play?

S: They gave us each a coin that we can check out the games like Monopoly and they would let us out the balls (?) and all that.

F: Were there a lot of people there or...?

Subject #29, page 9

S: Yes, there were a lot of people there. But it was not crowded. There were a lot of people Took up <gap> space but it wasn't crowded or anything, had to, you know...

F: What kind of places did you live in? Do you remember what it was like?

S: It was like an army camp that they had about....a big building..about, I think it was two stories or three stories... and then like rooms separate and <gap>?

F: And how did you get to Virginia?

Library of Congress

S: Well first, some day they sponsor us out the camp then we live in Pennsylvania. Then we move down to Florida. Miami....and then we move up here.

F: Oh, how long were you in Florida?

S: Three years.

F: What did you think of Florida?

S: It was nice. Warm. It was like Saigon then...but...well you see my mom...my uncle and everybody else live up here. That's why she want to move up here.

F: What were you...what was your mom doing...did you know people in Florida?

S: No.

F: How did you get a sponsor? Was it somebody you knew or..?

S: Yes, my dad. He knew friend.